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Barbie's Connection

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By Tom Bower

Klaus Barbie began working for the Counter Intelligence Corps of the U.S. Army in the spring of 1947. He remained on the Army's payroll as an intelligence agent until early 1951 when he was smuggled out of Germany to Genoa, Italy, with the help of CIC and the Central Intelligence Agency. From Genoa, Barbie made his way with his family to Bolivia where he prospered as a businessman. In February of this year he was arrested and extradited to France to stand trial for "crimes against humanity."

This is the story of his American connection. It is based on interviews with several of the Americans directly involved with him, on historical records of CIC operations in Germany at the end of World War II and on records deposited in the national archives of France.

During the German occupation of France, Barbie was the Gestapo chief at Lyon where, according to French indictments, he ordered and participated in numerous atrocities—murders and acts of torture—inflicted on Jews and members of the French resistance. In the face of the Allied advance in 1944, he fled to Germany and turned up in 1947 in Bavaria. He

was spotted there one day, standing on a railroad platform in Augsburg, by Kurt Merk who had spent the war in Dijon, France, as a member of the Abwehr, the intelligence arm of the German army.

Merk already had an American connection. It came about in this way. Soon after the German surrender, Reinhard Gehlen—the head of *Fremde Heere Ost*, the section of the German General Staff which, through the Abwehr, specialized in eastern Europe—made a deal with an American intelligence officer, Gen. Edwin Sibert, to hand over to the Americans all his invaluable records.

Sibert was deeply suspicious of the Russians, a view not wholly shared by his superiors at the time, the summer of 1945. Gehlen was taken to Washington for extensive interrogations at the War Department. The department subsequently informed Sibert by telex that Germans were not to be used to gather intelligence about the Russians.

Sibert ignored that directive. It was the Army's view in Europe that such intelligence

was needed and that only experienced Germans could provide it.

A recruitment effort was launched. Kurt Merk was signed on in April, 1946, by an officer of the 970th Counter Intelligence Corps Detachment, Robert Taylor, who now lives in Syracuse, N.Y.

The CIC's mission at war's end had been thoughtfully considered during the months before the D-day landings and was detailed by Allied headquarters in handbooks and numerous briefing papers. That mission was to spearhead the demilitarization and denazification of Germany. CIC was under orders to arrest any German who might pose a threat to the Allied occupation, arrest nearly all Nazi Party officials and any member of a paramilitary force which was part of the Nazi regime.

Within a year this task was largely accomplished and a new mission for CIC rapidly evolved. The divisions in Germany between the Russians and the other Allies had hardened. The Cold War had begun. Former allies had become enemies and German enemies had become friends. There was now a

place for Germans in the CIC's scheme of things.

Merk became a valued and trusted CIC informant in the year before he spotted Barbie at the railroad station. After their chance meeting, he persuaded Barbie to join him in this new career.

Barbie's interview for the job took place at an office of the 970th CIC at the small Bavarian town of Kempten, 60 miles from Munich. Barbie was hired in April, 1947, with the approval of a regional CIC officer, Dale Garvey, who now lives in Kansas. Barbie's first handler was a young CIC officer, Robert Taylor. Today, Taylor and Garvey claim to have no specific recollection of Barbie.

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